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ABSTRACT

Attempting to discredit the widely held myth that the study of foreign languages serves only the interests of the college-bound student, this study describes a survey on the status of foreign language study in Illinois and proposes a new rationale for the study of foreign languages which would benefit the majority of students in American schools. Three main ideas are considered: (1) the importance of foreign language education in an international world, (2) foreign languages in an era of rapid communication, and (3) language instruction in a multi-racial and cross-cultural society. (RL)

A New Rationale for the Teaching of Foreign Languages in Illinois: A Humanistic View

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The Office of the
Superintendent of
Public Instruction
State of Illinois
Michael J. Bakalis
Superintendent

PREFACE

Many myths have surrounded the study of foreign languages in the United States. Among them, "The study of foreign languages serves only the interest of the college-bound students," the "elite," or as some would consider it a "fringe benefit" in the educational program. Recently, some educators and administrators in colleges and universities have questioned the place of foreign languages in the core curriculum.

In an attempt to break down these myths, two objectives were to be accomplished:

1. A survey on the status of foreign language education in Illinois was conducted;

2. A new rationale for the study of foreign languages which would benefit young Americans now enrolled in our schools was formulated. Foreign language teachers, students, parents and educators contributed to the documentation of this rationale.

Consideration was given to three main ideas: the importance of foreign language education in an international world, in an era of rapid communication, and in the multi-racial and cross-cultural society in which we live. The Foreign Language Specialists are solicitous to help any school district or community wishing to set up a program for the teaching of a second language in their schools.

Michael J. Bakalis
Superintendent of Public Instruction

June 1972

In the face of wars and scientific progress leading to man's destruction and the regression of civilization, perhaps, never before in the history of the world has there been a stronger appeal for the humanization of education. True educators would agree that one of the best ways to accomplish this goal is through the teaching of other peoples' language and culture. Foreign language teachers, students, parents and educators are very much aware of the major role language study must play today in the educational program of every student in preparing him to live his life fully in his own environment and establish harmony, and understanding in a world society.

> "Great is language ... it is the mightiest of all sciences.
> It is the fullness and color and form and diversity ...
> and of all qualities and processes;
> It is greater than wealth ... it is greater than buildings
> or ships or religions or paintings or music."
>
> Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass

All students can benefit psychologically, intellectually and esthetically from the study of the language and culture of other peoples. Language learning involves not only the communication skills: understanding, speaking, reading and writing a foreign tongue but also a set of customs and habits.

> The study of a second language can be a contributing factor in the development of the student's concept of himself as a person.
>
> - It helps him to understand the value of his individuality.

- It helps him to know himself better as a person.

- It contributes to his total enrichment and growth as a person.

- It helps him to relate better to others of another culture or even the same culture if he fully accepts himself with all his imperfections and weaknesses.

- It helps him to understand what speakers from another culture think and why they think differently from him.

- It gives him a sense of accomplishment in speaking and understanding other peoples' language.

The study of a second language opens a door of learning and expands the intellect of the student.

- It enhances the value of one's own language. It increases reading ability, heightens sounds, rhythmic patterns, the meaning of words and feelings for ideas and their impact.

- It provides pleasure for leisure hours. It has often been said: "If you have never studied another language, you do not know your own."

- The student discovers the richness of source materials and other writings in languages other than his own.

- The student culls for himself the news of another nation instead of someone else's interpretation. It provides a fresh approach to what is now.

- The student learns of older civilizations, their arts, and literature, awakens his curiosity, intellect, spirit and at the same time refines his tastes.

- History, music, art become more meaningful to the student who knows the language of the people, their way of viewing and interpreting human situations.

Through the study of a second language a student learns thoroughly human values.

- He learns to understand not only himself, but his world and the needs and aspirations of his fellowmen.
- He learns to reassess his own values and to reflect on the values of another culture and society.
- He learns to develop compassion, tolerance, open-mindedness, awareness and flexibility in his relationship with others.
- The diversity he encounters in his culture and the culture of other people provides personal enrichment.
- He learns to appreciate the good and beautiful that may not give immediate cash results.

The study of a foreign language adds another dimension to the student's own way of life and enables him to become a more effective individual in the society in which he moves. To quote Napoleon: "The man who knows two languages is worth two people."

He is able to communicate with people of other languages and cultures in his own environment.

- It teaches him how to reach into the intellect of other people and appreciate the language they speak.
- It teaches him to respect another person's ideas and ways of thinking.
- It teaches him to understand other people's feelings, habits and behavior, their values and principles.
- It helps him to accept all ethnic groups and nationalities.
- It enables him to feel the warmth that goes with communication in a language someone else speaks.

- It helps him to form bonds of friendship and develop the spirit of harmony in human relations.

The study of a second language broadens the student's view of the world and narrows the communication gap between countries.

- It makes the world more meaningful, brings him hours of pleasure, and makes world travel more interesting.
- It helps him to understand the international dimension of political affairs.
- It helps him to assume a leadership role in the world, and build a world society.
- It enables him to penetrate the thinking and views of people who can provide different insights into their culture as well as his own culture.
- It allows great minds to enter into the mainstream of manpower.

The knowledge of a second language is advantageous to students seeking careers in all aspects of human relations:

- Government

  Diplomatic Service Corps and International Relations
  Ambassador, Consul, Foreign Service
  Federal Bureau of Investigation and Intelligence Service
  United States Information Service
  United Nations translator and interpreter
  Court Interpreter
  Peace Corps
  Service to foreigners in the United States
  Secretaries in government service

- Business and Trade

  Administrator for over-seas business firms
  Personnel manager for an American company abroad

Company representative in foreign country and to foreign clients
Hotel Management
Secretary and Receptionist
Merchandising
Importing and exporting goods
Overseas accountants and auditors

- Travel Service

Airline officers around the world
Airline hostesses and stewardesses
Travel Bureau agents
Advisor on foreign travel
Tourist guides in foreign countries

- Communications Media

Written
Journalism
Foreign correspondence
Advertising
Translations of books, articles, reviews

Oral
Foreign films, directors and producers, dubbing
Radio announcer, broadcasting, news analysis
Entertainment, plays, operas, theatre
Recording Industries
Simultaneous Interpreters
Telephone Operators

- Education

Teaching in
American schools all levels
Schools abroad
Armed Forces
Peace Corps
Recording tapes and disques for educational purposes
Laboratory monitor

- Research

  Scientific
  Literary
  Government
  Informant or Consultant
  Personal or private

- Social Work

  Court interpreter
  Case workers among immigrants

- Fashions

  Buyers
  Co-ordinators for styles
  Designers

- Gastronomy

  Hotel chefs, connoisseurs of foreign foods
  Menu writing
  Cook books and recipes

In conclusion, in order to realize the points set forth in this rationale, the study of a second language should be integrated in the school curriculum at all levels of learning. It can truly benefit every student in the State of Illinois and assist in humanizing education today in a multi-racial and cross-cultural society, and serve the nation and posterity in human relations and world understanding.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
MICHAEL J. BAKALIS, SUPERINTENDENT

Interest Poll
on
Second Language Learning in Illinois
June 15, 1972

Name _____

Title _____

School Name and District Number _____

College or University _____

Organization _____

Community Interest Group _____

Street Address _____

City or Town _____, zip code _____

Check Yes or No where appropriate.

	Yes	No
1. I am interested in promoting the study of a second language.	___	___
2. I agree that the study of a second language should begin in kindergarten.	___	___
3. I agree that the study of a second language should be part of the regular curriculum.	___	___
4. I would be willing to assist in organizing a study group interested in learning a second language.	___	___
5. Which language would you prefer for your school or community district?	___	___

Kindly tear off this form at the perforated line, and mail to the address below on or before October 1, 1972:

Sister Marie Celeste, Assistant Director
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Instruction and Curriculum Section
316 South Second Street
Springfield, Illinois 62706